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Boston Female Society, Boston 2
A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE
ORIGIN AND PROGRESS

OF

The Boston Female Society for
Missionary Purposes.

WITH

EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORTS OF THE SOCIETY,

IN MAY, 1817 AND 1818,

AND

EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORTS OF THEIR MISSIONARIES,

REV. JAMES DAVIS,

AND

REV. DUDLEY D. ROSSETER.

Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature....*Jesus.*

BOSTON :

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BRIEF ACCOUNT, &c.

"THE BOSTON FEMALE SOCIETY FOR MISSIONARY PURPOSES," was constituted Oct. 9, 1800. Fourteen ladies, part of the Baptist and part of the Congregational denominations, composed the Society. The two first years after its commencement, its little funds were devoted to the aid of the "Massachusetts Congregational Missionary Society." After this, a Baptist Missionary Society being formed, it was agreed to appropriate the subscriptions of each member to her own denomination; and that both should meet together for prayer, and to conduct their usual business. The meetings to be holden the first Monday in every month.

Different sums have been collected from year to year, and applied to various missionary purposes as follows, viz.

The purchase of Bibles, Testaments, and other religious books, for distribution by missionaries in destitute places; to home and foreign missions of both denominations; to the translation of the scriptures into the oriental languages, and to the support of a mission in this town.

The Society by its constitution is at liberty to make such appropriations of its funds, as the openings of Providence suggest to be duty; whether in aid of foreign or domestic missions. It has increased to nearly 200 members. Donations have been received from individuals and sister societies to the amount of \$300, including which, \$3825,39 have been raised by the Society since its formation, viz. 2219,69 by the Baptist, and 1505,70 by the Congregational branch, and \$100 by voluntary contributions of both.

There are, it is presumed, many females in this place who would rejoice to contribute to the support of this Institution, if they knew such an one existed. As it will now be more generally known, it is hoped that persons of both denominations will come forward and aid the Society either by subscription or donations, which will be appropriated agreeably to the constitution. Though a large proportion of the present members, are "women professing godliness," others have united with them in promoting the best interests of their fellow beings; and some have received a blessing to their own souls while engaged for the good of others.

*The following is extracted from the Report of the Secretary,
in May, 1817.*

“During the past season the attention of the Society has been particularly turned to the state of *our own town*. The multiplied exertions in favour of more distant objects have at length led us to look *at home*, (where charity is usually said to begin.) Viewing the destitute situation of a certain class of inhabitants, whose poverty forbids their appealing decent at public worship; and of others who have abandoned themselves to every species of vice, and are totally disinclined to go where the gospel is dispensed; and especially considering how few, comparatively, can be accommodated in our houses of worship, free of expense; we have thought it our duty to try the practicability of a new plan; and have accordingly appropriated the whole income of the year, which closes this day, to the support of two missionaries (for a few months, as an experiment) to visit and labour with the above description of people. May the Lord raise up and eminently qualify men for this important undertaking. We trust we have not gone thus far without deliberation, nor without prayer. And every soul, who has an interest at a throne of grace, should earnestly supplicate a divine blessing. We know that Paul may plant and Apollos water, but God alone can give the increase. We know that we cannot make one hair white or black; but we are taught to “sow our seed in the morning, and in the evening not to withhold our hand, not knowing which shall prosper, or whether both shall be alike good.” The Lord has wonderfully blessed the exertions of his people; and he has promised to be with his faithful ministers even to the end of the world. We therefore cherish the animating hope that some real good will result from this attempt, and that habitations which now echo with profanity and discord, will ere long resound with the mild accents of the gospel, and the voice of prayer and praise will be heard.

Should *only one immortal being* reap essential advantage from these labors, it will be an ample reward. But on the contrary, should they all, with one consent, put these things from them, and judge themselves unworthy of eternal life; we may conscientiously turn to some other object; and the ministers of Jesus may shake off the dust of their feet for a testimony against them.

It will be recollected by those who were present at our last meeting, that another important subject was brought forward. The question had been agitated—Should any of those poor unhappy females, who have wandered into the paths of vice and folly, and forfeited their good name and reputation, be disposed by means of missionary labors to reform and become correct in their lives,—*what is to become of them?* respectable persons would feel it unsafe to take them into their families; and their connections (if they have any) probably would have too little confidence in their reformation to receive them to their homes. To

remain where they are, would expose them not only to sufferings, but to a liability of relapsing into sin. What then can be done? It was suggested, that if proper exertions should be made, an Asylum might be provided, to which those pitiable objects might resort, where they should be suitably employed, and the proceeds of their labour go to their support. Here they might be favoured with religious instruction and wholesome advice, until proof be given that their repentance is sincere. They might then be able to obtain an honest and reputable living for themselves. It was resolved that a close box, with an aperture in the lid, be kept in the Society for the purpose of receiving voluntary contributions for this object, should the attempt be made. This is indeed a small beginning, but the Lord is able to provide a sufficiency. The society by no means proposes to take a work of such magnitude into its own hands; but most sincerely and ardently recommends it to the consideration and patronage of the benevolent and virtuous; and would cheerfully help as far as consistent. Without boasting, it may be asserted, that many thousands of dollars have been raised in this town to spread the gospel in regions not favoured with its heavenly influence; we may therefore conclude that the friends of religion and virtue in other places would cheerfully contribute to an undertaking like this; particularly when it is considered, that but a small proportion of these unhappy creatures are natives of this place. They are collected from almost all parts of the country, and some even from foreign climes. The calamity is a *public* calamity; the cause of virtue is a *public cause*, and if good is done it will be felt by the community. There are several Institutions of this kind in Europe, which have proved a blessing to many. To check the torrent of vice, which is flowing with increasing impetuosity, and restore the wanderer to her father's house, must be truly gratifying to the benevolent mind. And if the *great Redeemer* condescended to notice and reclaim such characters, his disciples must view it a privilege and an honour to follow his example. "The disciple is not above his master."

In answer to a Circular to similar societies, proposing a correspondence by letter and concert in prayer; communications have been received from 97 societies; and from information otherwise received, we find that many more have united in the prayer meeting. Thus, while the female of the metropolis rejoices to retire from her usual avocations, her sisters in the country also feel it their privilege on **THE FIRST MONDAY IN THE MONTH**, (a day favoured of the Lord;) to assemble with the thousands of Israel, and pour out their united supplications before the mercy seat."

Boston, May 5, 1817.

Extracts from the Report, May, 1818.

“Through the good hand of our God upon us,” we have been preserved another year.

When our Report was made the last May, we were in a state of suspense, waiting to hear from Missionaries, to whom application had been made to engage in the service of the Society. On the 16th of June Mr. Davis arrived in town, and commenced his labours the same week ; and in October Mr. Rosseter also came. They both have laboured with little interruption to this time. The interesting scenes through which we have passed must be too well recollected by the society to need a recital. The attempt was at first made as an experiment of its utility ; but the success which attended the effort, encouraged the society to continue their exertions ; and a number have stepped forward to the help of the Lord against the mighty, and united in promoting the cause. Trials have indeed been mingled with our mercies, the keenness of which, those particularly who have taken a more active part in the business of the society, have *felt*. But trials have been the lot of God’s people from the conversion of Abel to the present hour. Trials therefore ought not to discourage us, if our object and our motives be right. All the good, which will result from the labours of our missionaries, probably will not be known in time ; enough however has been apparent to justify the hope that if so happy ourselves as to arrive at heaven, we shall meet some there who will be their glory and joy.

Among the most promising projects of the mission is the establishment of religious meetings, and a school in a neighborhood of coloured people at the north part of the town. There ignorance and vice reigned, and their dread retinue of evils has closely followed them. Since these exertions, there has been a manifest alteration for the better, and one woman has been hopefully converted. It should be remembered that this unfortunate people were introduced into our country by the cruel hand of avarice and barbarity ; and if there be a race of human beings, which have a right to *demand* our charity, next to the descendants of Abraham, these must have a claim.

Since our last Report death has been commissioned to come in among us, and has removed four of our number to the world of spirits. We hope we may say, “these all died in faith.”

To two of our young friends* who still remain members of this body, we have given the parting hand, expecting to see their faces no more in the flesh. If the winds and waves have been propitious, they have, ere this, reached their destined port, and met those venerable fathers, who have for years been labouring to spread the word of life through the region and shadow of death.

One trying dispensation of Providence remains to be recorded ; Mr. Hubbard, a young man of piety and talents had engaged in the service of the congregational branch of the society, to go on

* Mrs. Colman and Mrs. Wheelock, the wives of the last missionaries to India.

a mission to the destitute parts of Virginia. His health was delicate, but his physician and friends thought a tour to the southward might be beneficial rather than otherwise; and his mind being set on the work, he commenced his journey. But before he reached the ground of his labours, his health rapidly declined, and he died in Savannah in March last, surrounded by strangers, but happy in the bosom of his God.

Twelve Societies have been added to the list of our correspondents; which, with the ninety-seven from whom we had previously received communications, make one hundred and nine. If the hearts of all those little praying companies are rightly influenced, what clouds of incense annually ascend to heaven; and what plentiful effusions of the Holy Spirit may we expect will descend in answer to those petitions! And the consideration that these prayers are united with millions of others, swells our faith almost into vision; and we believe the Lord will complete the glory of the church in his own time."

Boston, May 4, 1818.

The following is extracted from reports of Mr. Davis, made to the Society at different times.

Whosoever shall convert a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins. - - - James v. 20.

He that winneth souls is wise. - - - - - Prov. xi. 30.

And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever. - - - - - Daniel xii. 3.

—"Commenced my labours in the service of the Society, June 19, 1817. I have now been 3 months engaged in the work, and have preached in six different sections of the town, (a considerable part of the period, eight and nine times a week.) Have attended a number of prayer-meetings; visited between three and four hundred families; distributed several hundred religious tracts, and several dozens of Bibles. Numbers have with tears in their eyes, expressed a great sense of gratitude, in view of the attention paid to them, and *some*, apparently from the fulness of their hearts, after conversation and prayer, have said, "God bless you," &c.—In Southark street, West Boston, the people are astonishingly destitute of the means of religious instruction, and appear not to have the fear of God before their eyes. Just in that vicinity, there are more than a thousand people who do not attend public worship, who are evidently hastening on with amazing rapidity the broad road to ruin. With propriety it may be said, *there* is the place where *Satan's seat is*. *There* awful impieties prevail; and all conceivable abominations are practised; *there* the depravity of the human heart is acted out; and from this sink of sin, the seeds of corruption are conveyed into every

part of the town. Five and twenty or thirty shops are opened on Lord's days from morning to evening, and ardent spirits are retailed without restraint, while hundreds are intoxicated, and spend the holy sabbath in frolicking and gambling, in fighting and blaspheming; and many in scenes of iniquity and debauchery too dreadful to be named. The street is filled during the day with old and young of all complexions, numbers drunken and sleeping by its sides and corners; and awful noises and confusions are witnessed. Lord's-day evening is the period when greater numbers collect than at any other season of the week; *hundreds of boys* from all parts of the town, on this evening repair thither, where their ears are assailed with the dialect of the dark world; while all the oaths are uttered, which the powers of the mind, long exercised in the service of the adversary, and excited to action by a totally depraved heart, could possibly invent. Here these lads enter a school, calculated to give them an entire disrelish for all moral and religious restraint; and to cause them wholly to disregard parental authority and instruction:—A school pre-eminently calculated to erase from their minds all thoughts of God, and their accountability—a school, entirely suited to train them for the commission of all conceivable crimes, to be a disgrace to their family connections, to be pests in society, and subjects for a *world of despair*. Here, week after week, whole nights are spent in drinking and carousing; and as the morning light begins to appear, when others arise from their beds, these close their doors. Multitudes, evidently in different professions and employments, clad in a manner indicative of affluence and high life, as soon as the sable curtains of the evening are drawn around them, pass and repass from one end of the street to the other; and beyond all doubt contribute much in different ways to the support and encouragement of the abandoned and the prostitute. Here in one compact section of the town, it is confidently affirmed and fully believed, there are *three hundred* females wholly devoid of shame and modesty. Their manner of life leads to the destruction of constitution and health. Wretchedness and misery ensue; disease and sickness bring great numbers to the alms-house. Multitudes of coloured people, by these examples, are influenced to habits of indolence. Hundreds are dispersed into different parts of the town, and are watching every opportunity to steal. Various articles of provisions are brought and sold here for a trifle. These depraved creatures, as soon as the darkness of the evening screens them from view, are thrusting themselves into entries and other places, and pilfering clothes of different kinds, which they pawn or sell. Children are continually begging from house to house, and are in this way trained up in habits of idleness: and while they collect provisions to support their parents and others, the examples they witness are calculated to confirm them in iniquity, and effect their everlasting ruin. Great numbers of coloured people, when the inclement season of the year comes on, are brought to circumstances of extreme suffering, being wholly destitute of food and clothes. Wretchedness, in all its forms,

is experienced. Four or five of them have been seen lying on one floor without any bed, or articles of bed clothes : sick, and incapable of helping themselves ; affecting spectacles of human woe !—they must be carried to the alms house, or die. It has been ascertained that such characters are to be found in many other streets. It is probable there are at least two thousand of them scattered over the town.

Being urged to attempt instrumentally to effect a reformation, or to remedy the evil, I appointed a religious meeting a little to the eastward of this street. Individuals were prevailed on to attend : the week after, I appointed to attend religious exercises a little to the south-west of this street ; the number present was considerably increased, some were affected. These meetings have been continued, and evidently blest to the benefit of some precious and immortal souls.—In consequence of a death which took place in a house of ill fame, I was requested to call and attend prayer. The house was occupied by the worst of characters. The meeting was considerably numerous and very solemn. A woman, past the meridian of life, residing under the same roof, used profane language and uttered blasphemies in a distant part of the house during the season of worship ; and a number of times afterwards disturbed the meetings by similar enormities ; but was eventually constrained to request a meeting in her own room. A decent family, though in low circumstances, moved into this house, being ignorant of the character of its occupants. The eldest daughter, a girl about fourteen or fifteen years of age, who appeared discreet, was in a few days enticed and drawn away by the vilest of the vile ; she soon became awfully profane in her language, and immodest in her conduct ; she left the family of which she was a member, cast off all restraint, refused submission to her parents, and appeared to be on the brink of ruin. Being present in the time of solemn religious worship, she was seen to manifest a great degree of depravity, and a determination to rise above all fear of God, and the consequences of her daring impiety. She was excessive in her laughter and trifling ; she was repeatedly conversed with and reprov'd. Her situation was represented to her mother, who was constrained to weep over her. Expostulations were reiterated, and means used abundantly to reclaim her. It appears the snare is broken, and the young immortal is escaped. Think, O think, ye affectionate mothers, how would your hearts be wrung with anguish, and your eyes run down with tears, in view of your amiable daughters, the objects of your tenderest solicitude, ensnared by the wiles of the ungodly, and falling victims to the vile lusts of brutes in human form. I have visited from house to house ; in a variety of instances have been requested to pray with and for them ; numbers, with tears, have related the manner in which they have lived, and expressed their determination to reform, and a strong desire to get away from that place. Some of those persons were brought there by fraud and intrigue, contrary to their inclinations, and

wholly ignorant of the wiles which prevailed ; concerning whom I had reason to believe they would leave the Hill, and reform, if any place could be provided for their accommodation, and means for their assistance."

From the encouragement that has been given by a number of respectable persons, that such a place would be provided, if sufficient evidence of their sincerity should be obtained ; they have been informed of the benevolent design, and appear anxious for its accomplishment.

At another time Mr. Davis states :—

"A desire was expressed that religious meetings should be attended on Lord's-days. A large hall was therefore opened for this purpose ; between two and three hundred crowded in, many were standing round the doors, all were attentive, some were affected : wildness, wonder, and surprise, were depicted in the countenances of many, and but very few appeared to have any idea of being seated. In the evening, religious exercises were attended in a chamber on account of a woman who was sick. She appeared to be much impressed through the week in view of her guilt and danger, and to have alarming apprehensions of future wrath ; she frequently called upon me to pray with her, and inquired what she should do to be saved. Next Lord's day, religious exercises were attended again in the hall, and at evening, in the chamber just referred to. The house was occupied by a Mr. —. A number of females came in, and some coloured men ; but there was none on whom I could greatly depend for assistance or protection, in case of difficulty. Mr. — and his wife came in and took their seats. About the middle of the exercises, Mr. — left the room ; his wife began in strains of awful profanity ; and, uttering dreadful blasphemies and imprecations, went out and declared with an oath, if I came up the stairs again, she would break my neck. At the close of the meeting she came to the woman confined to her bed, called her hard names, addressing her in language expressive of the greatest cruelty, and with threats and oaths, ordered her to leave the house and be gone. Next Lord's day morning, one week from this time, she was taken suddenly in the most distressing manner, and on Tuesday she died. God declares that he is angry with the wicked every day ; that they shall not live out half their days. Truly it is a fearful thing for a sinner to fall into the hands of the living God.

After meetings had been attended a number of Sabbaths in the hall, religious exercises were appointed on the *evening* of the Lord's day : an unusual number collected. One evening a young man (it was said from the navy-yard in Charlestown) entered the hall with his hat on, spoke audibly, and manifested a determination to disturb the meeting. He was particularly addressed and cautioned. Before the week terminated, he was dead. Next Lord's day evening, in the same place, a sailor came among

the assembly and made disturbance ; within four or five days, he was called into the eternal world. Well may we consider the power of the Lord ; his daring, implacable foes, should tremble. He says, a fire is kindled in mine anger, which shall burn to the lowest hell. Wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with him. The reward of his deeds shall be given him. The wicked shall be driven away in their wickedness, they shall not go unpunished. The significant, impressive question should come home to the bosom of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, "who hath made thee to differ ? what hast thou which thou hast not received ?"

It has been intimated to those unfortunate and abandoned females, that some place would be provided for them. Some of them are frequently inquiring *when* they shall have assistance to get away from the Hill ? They express a great desire to leave the place. One woman remarks, that at the death of her husband, she was left in destitute circumstances, with a number of helpless children. She says she has conducted in such a manner, that the idea of seeing her family connections would be intolerable. Expresses much regret that she cannot get away. She says she has been all over town to try to get a place, but no one will take her in. Observed, she could not bear the thoughts of her children being reproached in view of their mother's continuing to be a prostitute. She manifested great earnestness to obtain a Bible. After saying every thing to her I could, for her present and eternal good, and obtaining promises relative to the manner in which she would improve this Holy Book ; I put the sacred Volume into her hands.

As I was walking one day, I met a coloured man with his violin. I asked him, if he had not better lay aside that, and attend to the concerns of his soul ? He replied, "this is the way I have to get my living." I urged the importance of an interest in Christ, of being prepared to die : said he, "I have been encouraged for many years in my employ, as much by ministers as any class of people. They have sent their children to dancing schools and balls, and have themselves attended." He appeared shielded against conviction, and disposed to justify himself on the ground of the countenance he had received from those who are reputed wise and good, as spiritual guides.

The sailors are a numerous, and in some sense an important class of people. I have attended a number of meetings, particularly with them ; some of them appeared to listen with seriousness to the instructions of God's word. To a number of them I have given the Holy Bible, which has been received with expressions of gratitude. Appropriate tracts, also, have been put into the hands of many of them, which have interested their feelings. We have requests for meetings in almost every part of the town ; those who have not been in the habit of attending meetings any where, manifest great satisfaction in view of the means used to promote their spiritual good."

Sept. 7, 1818, Mr. Davis closes by the following statement.

I have been fourteen months in the employ of the Society, have attended four hundred seventy four religious meetings, including morning prayer-meetings, seasons of fasting and prayer, religious worship on the sabbath, and lectures. I have distributed one thousand four hundred religious tracts, and three hundred Bibles and Testaments. I have received in payment for a number of Testaments, to the amount of seven dollars, which I have paid to the treasurer of the Massachusetts Bible Society. I have attended to the instruction of ninety persons, adults and children, in Sunday schools. Have sent away* eight unfortunate females, to their respective homes, or to places of service. I have visited families, and conversed with individuals as much as health and strength would admit, and have frequently been called to pray with the sick and dying. These services have been performed in twenty-six streets, of which I have the names; and in many alleys and courts, the names of which I cannot ascertain.

Of those who have frequented these meetings: there have been seventeen* hopefully turned from darkness to light, with these I have particularly and frequently conversed when in their distress, and constrained to inquire what they should do to be saved? These, in the judgment of Christian charity, have experienced a change of heart, have been made to embrace and love the truth, and have been brought into the liberty of the glorious gospel. We are assured that all who are born of the Spirit and from above, will be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Extracts from Mr. Rosseter's Reports.

“In every period of the world, since the first transgression, all mankind have exhibited the degeneracy of their nature, by the undeviating course of sin and folly, which when left to themselves they have invariably pursued. Well might the prophet exclaim, The gold has become dim, and the most fine gold is changed! Yet there is sweet consolation in the reflection, that the all atoning blood of Jesus is sufficient to cleanse the vilest pollution; and no one need despair of mercy who is conscious of exercising evangelical repentance. For he hath said, “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Christ has suffered, bled, and died, that we might be raised from a state of misery and wretchedness to unfading and immortal glory.

* The persons here alluded to, as having been sent away, and those hopefully converted, are not the same persons hereafter mentioned in Mr. Rosseter's report. It should likewise be remarked that of those persons who have given evidence of a change, the principal part are from the more reputable (though poor) class of people.

During a residence of 12 months in this town, in the performance of my missionary duties, I have not unfrequently been compelled to witness such a sad variety of human misery as could not fail to impress my heart with the most painful sensations. Alas ! that rational and immortal beings, endued with capacities for the purest and noblest enjoyments, should sink even beneath the brute creation.

Since I commenced my labours in this place, I have visited 1896 families, distributed 54 Bibles, 68 Testaments, 45 Primers, and 1389 *Tracts*; have been called to visit 67 sick persons, and 19 in the agonies of death,—have attended 32 funerals, observed 3 seasons of fasting and prayer. Have attended meetings on Lord's-day in *Southark-Street*, and 10 other streets. Have held lectures in 36 different streets, and attended prayer meetings in 11, and visited 8 schools. I have also attended sabbath-schools in West-Boston and in the north part of the town.

In my daily visits I have generally met with the kindest reception ; in some cases, however, have been received with coldness ; but am happy to say, that in such instances they have almost invariably manifested a different disposition on my leaving them, and have often, with tears, solicited me to call again. In conversing with them I have endeavoured to bring into view the divine character, as excellent and terrible, and as angry with the wicked every day ; have also sought to impress their minds with the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the importance and absolute necessity of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to be accepted of him.

An astonishing degree of stupidity and ignorance pervades the minds of many. They scarcely know that they have a soul, and are wholly insensible that they are destined to the retributions of eternity. Some of them cannot read a word, and they often plead that, as an excuse for their total neglect of religion. Others have very incorrect views of the glorious plan of salvation, fondly imagining that a few prayers and alms-deeds will save them.

In visiting the sick and dying I have witnessed a variety of scenes, both pleasant and painful ; have beheld some who were just launching into eternity, in the sweet hope of a glorious immortality ; but, alas ! the scene has been too often reversed. I have beheld many, who have lived without God, and without hope in the world, who have died either stupid or despairing. In one of my visits found a young female, who in a state of intoxication scalt herself in such a shocking manner, that there was no hope of her recovery. She had her senses, but appeared perfectly stupid as it respects the concerns of her soul, then just ready to sink into the fathomless abyss. Oh how distressing, to behold a being destined to an eternal existence, thus perfectly indifferent whether that existence be happy or miserable !

Called with a friend at a house in Southark-street. In the corner of a dirty room on a bed of shavings, lay a horrid object—the sad victim of iniquity and disease. So emaciated was her form, that there was scarcely a vestige of her former self remaining.

So dreadful her appearance, that all who beheld her felt an involuntary emotion of terror. She attempted to rise, but her strength failed. She sunk back and exclaimed, Oh, Lord! have mercy upon me; my God, what shall I do? The scene was too affecting for language to describe. We endeavoured to converse with her, and to direct her to the cross of Christ. As she was destitute of every necessary, we thought it expedient to remove her to the alms-house as soon as possible. This we effected; and here we must close her mournful story. She expired in one hour after her removal, without manifesting any hope; a dreadful warning to her surviving associates to shun her example. But alas! such scenes are too often witnessed by those miserable creatures to have the desired effect. As we left this abode of sin and sorrow, which was directly opposite one of the halls, we beheld at the door several of those deluded women; my friend endeavoured to converse with them, and pointing to the room we just left, entreated them to look there and be reminded of the dreadful end which awaited them, if they persisted in their vicious practices; but they scoffed and mocked, and replied in very indecent language.

As I was one day passing with a friend through Southark street, we met a number of these abandoned females. Said one—"there is a minister;" another said in a low tone of voice, not expecting me to hear—"will you preach me a sermon?" I asked her what she said; she replied, "will you preach us a sermon?" I told her I would tell them a solemn truth in a few words, and that out of love to their souls. I then observed, that the course they were pursuing would lead them directly down to hell. I thought it not best to multiply words on this occasion, and left them, sincerely wishing that this solemn sentence might deeply impress their hearts; they stood amazed and made no reply.

Called on an aged and respectable woman who was very ill, and destitute of the comforts of life; conversed with her upon the interests of her immortal soul. She expressed great anxiety to make her peace with God, observed that she had been a wretched sinner, and was fearful that she had out lived her day of grace. She appeared to have a very great sense of her sin, as committed against an infinitely holy and merciful God. Said she, "all is dark and gloomy, Oh! that I knew that Jesus was my friend." I asked her if she thought she was prepared to die; with a faltering voice, and tears in her eyes, she replied, *no, no*. I endeavoured to pray with and for her, and after receiving many thanks, and being entreated to call again, I retired. I have since frequently called on her, and am happy to say, that she is now rejoicing in hope, and gives satisfactory evidence of a change of heart.

Visited a person in great distress of mind, who for forty years had been trusting in the plan of universal salvation. Asked him what were his views in the near prospect of dissolution. He replied, that his foundation was shaken, and he was convinced,

that that doctrine would do better to live by, than die by. Asked him how he would probably live could he recal his past life. He said, that he would lead a far different life. After conversing some time with his son, who sat by, and appeared much affected, I asked him what advice he would give to his son. He said he would advise him not to live as he had done ; but attend immediately to religion. He appeared extremely anxious to hear religious conversation, and earnestly requested me to pray with him. I asked him what he wished me to pray for ; he paused a moment, and replied, that his sins might be pardoned, and that he might be prepared for death. He begged of me to call again. I gave him a tract and retired. Have frequently called on him since, and found him in great distress, and sometimes almost despairing of mercy. Many will be constrained to say, "let me die the death of the righteous, that my last end may be like his," who have not been careful to live his life.

In visiting families in another part of the town, met with an unfortunate female whose history interested me much. She was a native of England, her father had been a military officer of some distinction, but unhappily for her he became dissipated, left her mother, took another wife, tore her from the arms of her fond maternal friend, and brought her to America ; where she was educated for the theatre, and became a celebrated actress on the stage. Thus was she led on to ruin, by one, whom the laws of God and man required, should have guided her youthful steps, and imprinted on her heart the pure principles of religion and virtue. What a dreadful account must he have to give, when arraigned before the bar of Jehovah, who has thus been the very pander of his own offspring. She is now a miserable, abandoned, and wretched woman ; but of late I have frequently seen her at meetings ; she appears solemn, and often weeps : expresses a great desire to leave her vicious courses, and return to the paths of virtue. She is very desirous to get a situation in some family, where she may obtain an honest livelihood—says she has not a friend to assist her.

As it respects a part of the Hill at West-Boston, I think it of momentous importance, that something should be done. It is impossible for any one, not acquainted with circumstances, to imagine, or for me to describe, the awful deeds of darkness which are committed with impunity in that most horrid sink of pollution. What scenes of agonizing misery, and hopeless death, are there to be met with ! There no soft sympathizing tones meliorate the agonies of despair, no hand of affection wipes from the pallid face the cold sweat of death. There all the feelings of humanity are obliterated. "Like brutes they live, like brutes they die." Perhaps many, who are now a disgrace to human nature, were once the idols of their fond parents, who cherished them with the tenderest affection ; and while lovely in innocence and purity, they reclined on their parental bosoms, have looked forward with delightful anticipations to the period, when their beloved daughters, happily established in the world, would be the support and solace of their declining years.

I have, with a friend, improved Saturday afternoons, for a number of weeks, in visiting on the Hill, from house to house, and from hall to hall. Sometimes we have witnessed scenes which were solemn and affecting; at others, our hearts have been pained to behold the extreme sufferings and distress of our fellow creatures. Not unfrequently have a number of them gathered around us, and listened with seriousness and attention to what was communicated,—have appeared deeply to regret that such has been their manner of life, and promised that they would in future pursue a different course.

We called one day at one of the halls; eight or ten of those abandoned females came around us with countenances expressive of the deepest solicitude to hear, and most of them were in tears. One of them said, that she had written to her parents, entreating them to receive her home; humbly imploring their forgiveness, and promising repentance and reformation."

At another time Mr. Rosseter states :—

"I have for a fortnight past made every exertion to obtain all possible information respecting the situation of West-Boston, and am now prepared to say, that many appear truly desirous to leave, have expressed the strongest anxiety, and have followed me from house to house, weeping and entreating me to assist them in getting away from the Hill. I am aware that it will be objected, that little dependence can be placed on their mere assertion; but from what I have daily witnessed, I will venture confidently to affirm, that should an opportunity offer, many would immediately and joyfully embrace it. In confirmation of this assertion, it is necessary to mention, that all, with but one exception, for whom means have been provided, have immediately left; *and that one* died in a most shocking manner, entreating her companions to take warning from her dreadful fate.

Have sent nine from the Hill, one a young girl who had been sometime resident there, and had sadly departed from every thing amiable and lovely in the female character—who had even threatened to destroy the life of her only parent, a fond mother. Distressed and wearied with her infamous mode of living, she at length formed the resolution to abandon forever a place where there were so many records of her shame and folly; and if possible to be reconciled to her parent. She went to a lady requesting her assistance, which she readily granted; and went in pursuit of her mother, and at her house they met; an affecting scene ensued. The injured parent was willing to forgive her unhappy daughter, in case of a reformation. It was thought best for them to go immediately to———where they have friends. Some necessary articles of clothing were obtained for the girl; my friend paid the expenses of their passage; and I saw them on board a vessel, which sailed in the evening.

Another, who for a long time has expressed a most fervent wish to get away and leave those dominions of sin, has, whenever she has seen me, in an affecting tone of entreaty, inquired of me,

Have you, sir, got a place for me yet? It has pained my heart that I have so often been compelled to answer in the negative. I trust that a reformation in her conduct took place last winter, from which I have reason to believe she has never swerved, though assailed with repeated and inveterate enemies.

A pious and respectable man lately informed me, that there was one of those unhappy females who wished to leave the Hill. She had written to him repeatedly, requesting him to get her away, and said that she not long since called at his house, entreating him to use his influence with a friend of hers, that she might be admitted into her family, until she could obtain a place. He accompanied me to where we saw and conversed with her. She appears truly penitent for her past errors, and heartily wearied with the detestable vices she had for years past pursued. She expressed a willingness to go any where, and do any kind of work. The gentleman who was my companion, obtained consent of her friend to receive her to her house. She was supplied with some necessary articles of clothing by a lady; and she that evening we hope bade a lasting adieu to those shameless haunts of infamy and prostitution. She has since, as far as I can learn, conducted with strict propriety. I have often seen her at meeting, where she always appears solemn and affected. A sister of hers, who had once been a companion with her in this broad road to destruction, had some time previous to this been rescued in nearly the same manner by the same gentleman. She by an undeviating course of good conduct has obtained a place in a very reputable family.

With respect to my meetings, I am happy to state, that they have generally been well attended; and a very flattering degree of solemnity and attention have been conspicuous in my little auditories. In some instances the house has been so crowded that many have been compelled to retire.

One circumstance, in particular, will not, perhaps, be uninteresting. At a meeting on the Sabbath, while I was engaged in supplicating the throne of grace, the man of the house, who had formerly been a very hardened and profane sinner, was so completely overwhelmed with a sense of his lost and ruined condition, that he was unable to sustain his body, and fell to the floor. The people gathered round him, exclaiming, he is dying! I was unable to proceed; but requested them to be silent, and observed that he was not dying, but sincerely hoped that he would die to sin, and live to righteousness. He, recovering himself a little, cried out, Do pray for me—O, Lord, have mercy on me! His burden of sin appeared greater than he could possibly endure. All were in tears and begging for mercy. The scene was too solemn for language to describe. I endeavoured to direct them to the only Saviour of lost men, and to urge the importance of their immediately surrendering themselves unreservedly to God. I continued the exercises as long as I thought profitable, and appointed another meeting at the same place in the afternoon. The house was crowded, a deep solemnity apparently pervaded every

mind, and every ear was attentive while I addressed them from these words, "*The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.*" After meeting I conversed particularly with the above mentioned person, who appeared truly humble and penitent; confessed himself to be a great sinner, and said that he deserved no mercy at the hand of his offended *Judge*, whose vengeance he had often imprecated in the most profane manner. I told him that Jesus had died for guilty and polluted sinners, and now all that was required of him, in order to be accepted of God, was to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and he should be saved. More than a week elapsed before he durst hope in the mercy of God, and now it is not without trembling. As far as I can learn, he is regular in his attendance on public worship on the sabbath—attends regularly to the duties of the family. I have often seen and conversed with him, and I think both from his life and conversation that he is now travelling in the strait and narrow path that leadeth unto life, and will in the resurrection morn be found among the redeemed.

In March I established an inquiring meeting at my house—the first evening there were 25 present, the next 27, and sometimes the house has been crowded so that some were unable to be seated. Many of them, we trust, were sincere inquirers, and some are now rejoicing in hope.

Prayer meetings have been peculiarly solemn and interesting; and we humbly trust that the Lord, by the influences of his Holy Spirit, has condescended to be one in the midst of us, and bless us. As far as we can ascertain, there are in the judgment of charity 20 hopeful converts, some of whom have connected themselves with different churches; and thirty or forty, who are, we trust, now anxiously inquiring what they shall do to be saved.

Truly we may exclaim, "What hath God wrought!" "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice. He doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. His word shall not return unto him void."

REMARKS.

IN reflecting on the statements which are made in the preceding Reports, a number of important ideas occur to the mind. The Society was formed for Missionary purposes, and had assisted the benevolent efforts of their brethren to advance the kingdom of their glorious Redeemer. They have beheld and rejoiced in the success which has attended their undertakings; and still feel disposed to aid them. But as the combined energies of the christian world are exerted to disseminate the knowledge of God, and the way of life and salvation among the ignorant and destitute in heathen lands, and in the interior of our own country; it appeared highly important that some means should be employed for the benefit of those immediately around us, who are wallowing in sin, ignorant of their real character, and insensible of their accountability to an omniscient Judge.

The closing command of our ascended Redeemer, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," applies equally in the present as in other cases. And the impressive charge to *begin at Jerusalem*, plainly argues, that, if it were the duty of the apostles to proclaim the gospel "to the Jew first," succeeding disciples should use every endeavour to promote the spiritual welfare of their neighbours; and then proceed, until "none shall need say to his brother, know ye the Lord."

It is contended by those who are not friendly to this mission, that it is unnecessary; that there are houses of worship in the town; and if those people were disposed, they might have opportunity to hear the gospel occasionally. This is true in a certain sense. But are not the free seats in all our houses of worship, where the unadulterated truths of the gospel are maintained, fully occupied on Lord's-days? And would the generality of those persons meet a welcome reception into pews, that are owned or hired, even when they are not filled? There are, it is true, occasional lectures, on which some might be permitted to attend (should they take a distant seat) if they were *disposed*. But the grand difficulty with most of them is, they are **NOT** disposed. The duty then devolves on christians to visit, or employ others to visit them in their own abodes, and endeavour by every possible method to awaken them to a sense of their lost and wretched condition, and the immense value of their immortal souls. Should we see

our neighbour's house at midnight enveloped in flames, could we content ourselves with the idea that he was asleep, half suffocated, and thereby *indisposed* to arise and flee from the impending ruin? Would it not be our duty to alarm him, and convince him that his situation was dangerous?

The pastors of our churches have a great variety of cares, and their time must be occupied in attending to their own immediate charge. And it is a well known fact, that there are thousands of our inhabitants that are not attached to any congregation, and have no minister on whom they can call as their pastor. There is also demonstrative evidence that numbers will attend on the preaching of the word, if they can have the opportunity free of expense, in their own neighborhoods, among their own associates, and in their usual attire.

After weighing those considerations, what reasonable objection can be made to this undertaking? Besides all the arguments which may be brought to prove that it is the duty of christians to seek the good of their neighbour, there is much reason to believe that the Lord has condescended to own the labours of his servants by making them instrumental of the salvation of some precious souls. In this, as in all similar cases, we must calculate on disappointments. We cannot expect that *all* those persons who have entertained hopes of mercy, will prove the genuine disciples of Christ. There always have been "tares among the wheat." Impositions were practised upon the apostles themselves; and human depravity is the same in the present as in past ages. If only half the number of supposed converts have in reality "passed from death unto life," heaven has been filled with the acclamations of angels; and the hearts of believers should swell with emotions of adoration and joy.

It is duty to acknowledge the kindness and liberality of a number of respectable brethren who have frequently accompanied the missionaries and otherwise contributed to the support of the mission. Also a vote of the selectmen, granting \$30 from the legacy of the late Mr. Abiel Smith, "for the benefit of Africans," to aid in supporting the African school at the north part of the town. Individuals have likewise contributed to this object, so as to enable the Society to continue the school till the commencement of winter, with the hope of opening it again in the spring.* The adults in this school have lived in a state of degradation and wretchedness, and the children have been exposed to the worst examples. It must therefore require the continued exercise of patient, persevering efforts, to effect important and lasting advantages. Sufficient improvement, however, has been made to induce a belief, that with the same facilities for instruction, their progress would be equal to that of the whites. But a considerable lapse of time, with proper information and encouragement, are requisite to wear away that dullness and depression, incident to their humiliating condition. A number of the children can

* A Sabbath school will be kept up during the winter.

now read with a degree of accuracy; and have committed portions of scripture, hymns and catechisms; and have made as much proficiency in writing and sewing as could be expected. The rent of the school room has been principally paid by the scholars.

It would be a very important acquisition to the mission, if small buildings could be erected or hired, as places of worship, where the poor might assemble without embarrassment. When the blessed Saviour commissioned his disciples to go forth and publish the gospel, he prefaced the mandate by this powerful argument, "FREELY YE HAVE RECEIVED, freely give." Christians may shortly feel it their duty and privilege to devise a plan for the accomplishment of this object. A number of halls at the west part of the town have been opened for religious exercises: but a place appropriated for the purpose, would be less exposed to interruptions, and be far more convenient for preaching.

Another subject of vast importance presents itself while perusing the foregoing Reports, viz. The necessity of an institution for the reception of those unhappy females who are weary of a life of infamy, and are willing to labour for their support, if employment could be provided for them. And likewise for the children, who are strolling our streets, begging from house to house; and frequently stealing in the most artful manner, as though deeply skilled in the practice. Truly it may be said, the sins of this people have reached up to heaven. And we may justly expect the judgments of a sin-avenging God will fall upon us, unless measures are taken to put away these abominations from the land.

The following observations, by a friend, are deserving the consideration of the public.

"Should the town see fit, (as it is hoped it will) to institute a work-house, or house of industry, where disorderly persons belonging to the town should be confined and employed, while others are sent to the towns to which they respectively belong, the benevolence of individuals might be exerted in behalf of those who conduct with the most propriety, by providing an Asylum, upon the same plan with those in London, and other parts of Europe.

"Vagrant children might be taken up in a similar manner, and placed under the care of masters and governesses, who should possess the requisite qualifications, where they should be taught to do all kinds of work suited to their age, and calculated to prepare them for future usefulness.

"By these means united, the growing evils under consideration would be in a very great degree counteracted; the property of our citizens would be more secure; and a new tone would be given to the morals of the lower classes of society."

We conclude our remarks by observing,

In all our endeavours to promote either personal or public happiness, it is of the utmost consequence that we possess a humble, prayerful spirit. The Apostle says, "In every thing by prayer and supplication let your request be made known unto God." It is his prerogative alone to command a blessing upon the most indefatigable and unremitting labours of his people. The noblest efforts of saints and angels united, could never effect the conversion of a sinner, without the agency of the Holy Spirit. Jehovah has declared, that he will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do these things for them. Let christians, then, under a solemn sense of their dependance and their obligations, be importunate at the throne of grace, and give the Lord no rest, until he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. He can make the feeblest of his children instrumental of good; and they have the delightful privilege of ascribing the glory to him.

Those who engage in benevolent operations must expect to meet discouragements and opposition in all their forms; but while imploring the influences of the Spirit, and relying on all-sufficient aid, let this animating portion of holy writ be kept in perpetual remembrance. *Be not weary in well doing, for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not.*

The following piece (copied from the Boston Gazette of Oct. 1, 1818,) is subjoined as a testimony that there are pious heads of families in this place, who feel anxiously solicitous that proper measures should be put into operation by the guardians of the town, for the prevention of those evils heretofore brought into view.

“ Messrs. Printers,

“ I was highly gratified on perceiving in your paper of the 17th of Sept. an address, (the publication of which entitles you to public esteem) by “ Phylanthropos” to his fellow citizens, on the importance of some measures being adopted to renovate the morals of a certain class of our population, and thereby prevent the destruction of thousands, as yet untainted with the dreadful poison. I have been expecting, with solicitude, that some ingenious mind would imbibe the spirit of that friend to mankind, and zealously contribute its influence in support of an object so vastly interesting to the community. But disappointed in this, and being the father of a rising family, whose present comfort, and future happiness are tender as the strings which twine about my heart, I feel compelled (though far less qualified than many others) to call on all virtuous heads of families to afford their individual aid to this momentous concern. Never was there a subject presented to the consideration of the public, more deeply fraught with consequences, important to society, than the one now suggested. What will all the improvements in education, in arts and elegance avail, if the morals of our children become vitiated? What will it avail for us to accumulate a property sufficient to establish them in business, or to settle them in life, if, during the period of minority, they are exposed to the artful machinations of the profligate, and the cunning of that detestable character, described by Solomon, Prov. 2nd, 5th, and 7th chapters? The almost certain consequences of such an exposure, is, the destruction of health, character, property, and life itself: and with those, the happiness of themselves and friends.

“ It is a well known fact, that houses of ill-fame have multiplied exceedingly within a few years; and are scattered through every part of the town. Our children, therefore, are necessarily liable to temptation; and however secure parents may feel, as respects the safety and virtue of their children, many of them can form but a faint idea, what company their sons are in, when out of their sight. There are few young minds (unless fortified by real religion, and a sense of the heinousness of sin in the sight of God,)



that are capable of resisting the fascinating alluring female, combined with the sneers of older and more depraved associates. Those enticing creatures have been seen, not only in parts of West Boston, but elsewhere, beckoning to young persons as they passed the street. Curiosity at first may induce a compliance, the intoxicating draught inflames the passions and overpowers the judgment, till the *inclination* is won; a repetition of the scene indurates the mind; the habit is formed, and the "good name" lost. Unlawful means must be resorted to, in order to meet expenses; thus every species of iniquity are linked together, and the wretch becomes a willing captive. What must follow? The susceptibility of a parent shrinks from the heart-rending recital.

"The question now forcibly presents itself; *what can be done?* Let parents be fully aware of the exposure of their beloved offspring, and they cannot long remain inactive, they will intercede with the fathers of the town, to adopt, and perseveringly execute, some suitable measures to correct, and prevent those enormities, (which, ere long, must draw down the righteous indignation of Heaven.) and thereby give an evidence to the world, that such disgraceful conduct shall not be suffered with impunity, in the metropolis of Massachusetts."

A FATHER.

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